THE FELLOWSHIP OF MASONRY

BY BRO. JOHN LEWIN MCLEISH, OHIO *AN ADDRESS BEFORE THE HYDE PARK MASONIC CLUB*

MASONRY is an earnest fellowship of tried and true men, cognizant of human failures in the past, conscious of human limitations in the present, and animated by the loftiest human aspirations for the future. That Mason who best understands the real, the esoteric meaning of our gentle philosophy, is best equipped to further the highest ideals of brotherly love, relief and truth, for which Masonry stands.

The sleeping giant of Masonry is awakening at last. The Spirit of Masonry is permeating the Mighty Fellowship, arousing them to the call of humanity in a time of trial, the like of which this generation of the Sons of Men had never thought to face. Amidst stress and storm, in the olden days, when men harbored suspicion and hate, and Nations knew not Peace, nor Brotherly Love, nor Divine Truth, sprang the Spirit of Masonry to evolve a philosophy of Moral and Social Virtues which should cement the Sons of Men of diverse Nations by unbreakable bonds of Fellowship.

For centuries, the propagation of a Secret Doctrine, "older than the oldest Church, more enduring than the most ancient Religion," slowly spread, girdling the globe, gathering into its Great Brotherhood the very best of every civilization until today', when it stands a Mighty Force, well equipped to properly fight the battles of Humanity, fearless in its sublime principles, and assured of ultimate achievement of its highest ideals, because of its practical application of that Great Masonic Dogma, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. Its very vitality is dependent absolutely upon unfaltering Faith in the Grand Architect of the Universe, cemented by those ties of true Masonic Fellowship quite unbreakable even in death.

It is fortunate that this is so. New problems today confront the Sons of Men. Mighty issues must be faced by the Nations of the World including our own. Ours the task to minister to the peoples of Europe, emerging supine from the dread cataclysm of War. We must meet their pressing need and extend the hand of true Masonic Fellowship the underlying principle of which is Masonic Charity. We are one of the World's Great Forces ever struggling along a common highway of Human Utilitarianism. There are others less constructive. That particular Force which proves itself best fitted to cope with the new needs of Humankind, will longest endure. Gauging future probabilities by past performances, this Masonry of ours will not be found wanting.

Let us consider for a moment the strength of the Mighty Fellowship of which it is our privilege to form a component part.

In the United States we number nearly two million brethren of forty-nine Sovereign Grand Lodges. The very smallest of these in our Federal District has jurisdiction over thirty lodges. In England the Grand Lodge has subordinate 2578 lodges. In Canada, eight Grand Lodges guide the destiny of more than 100,000 Masons. In Germany too are eight Grand Lodges, in South America six, in Australia six, in India five, in the West Indies three, in Mexico, Liberia, Egypt, Central America, Hungary, Servia, France and Italy one each. Our craft is numerically strong in Switzerland, Holland, Belgium and Portugal. From such figures you will perceive the Universality of the Great Brotherhood, sense its

wondrous potentiality for good, as the lines of Fellowship are drawn closer, ever closer, a happening sure to come with the termination of the present World War.

One of our greatest weaknesses, is the failure of many Masons, through indifference, lack of time,--environment,--or opportunity, to familiarize themselves with the glorious history and traditions of an Order whose main motif has been the making of Better Men and in consequence a Better Humanity during the centuries of its existence.

There are those raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, and hurried through the higher degrees of the Scottish or the York Rites, who glean but the slightest knowledge of the history and meaning of Masonry. Proudly they wear the emblems of our Order, with a dim conception that they stand for something intangible, that through force of our numbers they demand respect, and cannot but give them a somewhat superior standing in the mass. Ask these brethren to explain the symbolism of the emblems, or put to them the pointed questions: "What is Masonry doing today? What does it stand for? What has it ever done?" They are lost for reply. They do not know.

For each individual Brother, Masonry is what he makes it. None of its deeper philosophy will unfold itself to his ken, without individual effort. Once in his life, to him individually is imparted the instruction of the Worshipful Master. To him is given an enactment of the Solomonic and Hiramic legends so beautifully set forth in our Ritualistic Drama. Much or little of the strange ceremonies performed for his enlightenment he may grasp. For some, the little that they carry from the lodgeroom on the night of their "raising," is indeed of small value. As well expect a candidate, rushed through the thirty-two degrees of the Scottish Rite in the few days alloted the Annual Reunion, to grasp the full beauty, the hidden meanings and real philosophy of that Ancient and Accepted Ritual unless later, he shall follow up the lessons hurriedly hinted at with a thoughtful reading of the classic "MORALS AND DOGMA," of Albert Pike. or a less pretentious manual of instruction.

Although I take it for granted most of you are more or less familiar with the splendid history of our Fellowship, a brief reference to the history of Masonry from its beginning may not prove unwelcome. The arduous labors of thoughtful Masonic students collaborating in groups like the Ars Quatuor Coronati Lodge of London, the Lodge of Research of Leicestershire, England, our National Masonic Research Society of Iowa, and the Cincinnati Masonic Study School--has once for all dispelled any lurking doubts entertained as to the true Antiquity of Masonry.

Let the Father of Masonic Philosophy, Albert Pike, impart to you his conception of Freemasonry:

> "It began to shape itself in my intellectual vision into something more imposing and majestic, solemnly mysterious and grand. It seemed to me like the Pyramids in their loneliness, in whose yet undiscovered chambers may be hidden for the enlightenment of coming generations, the Sacred Books of the Egyptians, so long lost to the world: like the Sphynx half buried in the desert. . . In its Symbolism which, and its Spirit of Brotherhood are, its essence, Freemasonry is more ancient than any of the world's living religions. It has the symbols and doctrines which, older than himself, Zarathrustra inculcated, and it seemed to me a spectacle sublime, yet pitiful . . the Ancient Faith of our Ancestors, holding out to the world its symbols once so eloquent, and mutely and in vain asking for an interpreter. . .

> And so I came at last to see that the true greatness and majesty of Freemasonry consist in its proprietorship of these and its other symbols: and that its symbolism is its soul."

History shows clearly close connection between the Faiths and Philosophies of widely separated peoples. This is due to the fact that human nature never changes. It is the same now as it was in the prepyramidal days of ancient Egypt. Now, even as then, Man is groping blindly yet none the less determinedly in his endless Quest for Truth. In the long ago, before the age of books, Man expressed himself in Architecture through the use of various symbols, as the Swastika of the Chaldees, the Triangle of the Egyptians, the Triple Tau of the Hebrews, the Cross of the Christians, the Square, Compasses, Plumb, Level and Circle of the Architects, blood brothers of the Accepted Masons.

In 1818 an archeologist, Giovanni Belzoni undertook the excavation of the Tombs of the Kings at Biban-el-Maluk, on the outskirts of what was once the thriving and populous City of Thebes. The result of his efforts was to establish the existence of Masonry among the ancient Egyptians; a Masonry working upon the same basic principles as our Modern Masonic Philosophy.

Some of Belzoni's most convincing "finds" were in the Hall of Beauties, a stone chamber 20 feet by 14 feet in the tomb of Pharaoh Osiris. The walls were profusely adorned with painted pictures in relief, the old hieroglyphic symbol-writing of ancient Egypt which has thrown much light upon the customs and manners of antiquity. Belzoni's discoveries established that the original form of the Egyptian Masonic Apron was triangular: that the triangular and serpent aprons were exclusively royal: that this tomb of Pharaoh Osiris was dedicated to the Masonic Mysteries blended and united with emblems of discoveries, inventions and sciences in general, progressively as they took place: that Freemasonry in the earlier ages was very different from what it is now, and that at the time of Pharaoh Osiris, it had attained to a grandeur unknown in Europe.

Later discoveries in Egypt, as the finding of Masonic Emblems in the foundations of the Obelisk confirmed Belzoni's claim that Masonry was an Existent Fellowship in Ancient Egypt. On this point one of our greatest Ohio Masons, the late Enoch T. Carson, has written:

> "Masonic Archeologists, and students of its history and mysteries, are not startled at these discoveries. They know the Order is of great antiquity. The general doctrinal features, . . its cosmopolite character, its recognition and teaching of the Universal Brotherhood of Men, are substantially the same today as they were in the remote ages of antiquity. Its particular ritualistic ceremonies have undergone many and very great changes. These have been modified to a greater or lesser extent to correspond with the wants and tastes of particular nationalities. . . Those who believe that our Masonic Institution had no existence anterior to 1717 are literary knaves and dunces. . . Several learned works have been written to prove that Masonry sprung from, or is a continuation of the Ancient Egyptian Mysteries or Osiris Worship in a modified form. . . To the student of history, its origin is lost in the remotest ages of antiquity: but its principles and doctrines are fresh and grateful to the moral sensibilities of true humanity in whatever clime they may be promulgated, even as they were in the Poets' Golden Age, when Humanity was a Universal Brotherhood." . . This from so profound an authority as was Bro. Carson.

The acceptance of the Egyptian Origin of Freemasonry makes it easier for us to understand its transmission to the Hebrews after the Captivity and its spread through subsequent civilizations. Like all philosophic peoples, the Egyptians believed in a life after death. To them Death meant the DAWNING OF A SOUL. The very network of their drama of Faith based on the coming, death and resurrection of Osiris, is strangely suggestive of a certain impressive lesson taught in one of our sublime degrees today.

It is well known that the Hebrews drew the inspiration for much of their philosophy from Egypt. In their own version of the old, old story, tradition has woven a beautiful legend of a certain widow's son, all centering about the greatest world event of King Solomon's time, the building of the temple on Mount Moriah.

Nor did the spread of Egyptian influence end with the Hebrews. We can find traces of it in the Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece, and in those of Syria and Persia. All are possessors of a similar legend of a death and a resurrection. And about each one of the diverse Dramas of Faith is a Code of Morality, veiled in symbolism and protected by the secret signs and words of explanation possessed only by the initiate. Tolerant of the contemporary beliefs of the Profane, the primitive Masonic Mysteries under other names, drew into the Great Fellowship of Antiquity, many eager souls of many nations questing LIGHT.

We come now to the borderland between Ancient and Modern Masonry.

In its various ramifications, the Secret Doctrine was carried by the Tyrians from Mount Moriah where they had participated in the building of King Solomon's Temple, back to their homeland. They who had had a hand in the most stupendous architectural undertaking of ancient times, now formed themselves into a Society known as the Dionysian Architects.

Presently the sway of Rome began to extend itself over the ancient world. The Roman legions came to Tyre. With them they took back to the City of the Seven Hills, many of those skilled workmen who had developed Architecture to a high degree until then not dreamed of in Rome. In the home of the Caesars they imparted their wondrous skill to others and in time an Order akin to their own, The Collegia sprang into being. These too were fraternities of skilled artificers closely correlated, and protected by the same Secret System as their instructors. A somewhat significant characteristic of each of these Roman Collegia was the fact that each had its Master, its Wardens, a Secretary and a Treasurer, and a Quorum of three, as a requirement to meeting. The Square, the Plumb, the Level, the Cube, the Compasses and the Circle were symbolic emblems of the Roman Builders. Secrecy was a keynote of their organization.

In the days when Christianity was forbidden Heresy in still-pagan Rome, many of The Collegia became affiliated with the strange new Cult. For a time, the Emperor Diocletian purposely permitted himself to be blind to their departure from the ancient Faith to that of the Nazarene. When four of their most influential members refused to erect a statue to the God Aesculapius, Diocletian inaugurated a vigorous campaign for their undoing. Four of the Masters and one Apprentice suffered a horrible death. It is these Four who today are gratefully remembered by the Craftsmen of Europe, as our First Masonic Martyrs. After them is named the greatest Lodge of Research in the world, the Quatuor Coronati of London.

Such of the brethren of the Collegia as escaped fled to an impregnable refuge on Lake Como. Here they kept their secret organization alive perpetuating it as the Comacine Gild which flourished during the Dark Ages.

After Charlemagne, when the spread of Christianity led to an immense revival in building as a fine art, expressing itself in the erection of great Cathedrals, the Comacines followed in the wake of the Clergy, availing themselves of their ancient privileges as Free Men to go whither they might desire.

Out of their wanderings resulted the Cathedral Builders or Free Masons--the old Operatives--who traveled from city to city, from nation to nation, welcomed by all and recognized as the only Gilds quite competent to express the Spirit of the Times in speaking stone. Their organization was that of Lodges, with a Master, Fellowcrafts and Apprentices.

Apprentices were required to serve seven years before they might become Fellowcrafts. Then there was due examination and only such as were found duly and truly prepared, worthy and well-qualified were passed. Another characteristic was that each Mason had his own individual mark. Many of these you may see today in some of the great Cathedrals of Europe.

Perhaps I can best explain the great dependence of Freemasons upon Symbolic Expression by following the example of Ossian Lang and quoting from that masterly Chapter in Victor Hugo's "Notre Dame." It takes its title, "THIS WILL KILL THAT," from the gloom of one of its leading characters, the Archdeacon, as he contrasts a crudely printed book, one of the first of its kind, with the towers and gargoyle-decorated walls of the Church, supreme consummation of Masons' handiwork, to gloomily exclaim as he points to the printed page, "This will kill that." Says Victor Hugo:

> "The human race has had two books, two registers, two testaments-- Architecture and Printing--the Bible of Stone, and the Bible of Paper. Up to the time of Gutenberg, Architecture was the chief and universal mode of writing. In those days if a man was born a poet, he turned architect. GENIUS, scattered among the masses,--kept down on all sides by feudality,--escaped by way of Architecture, and its Iliads took the form of Cathedrals. From the moment that printing was discovered, architecture gradually lost its virility, declined and became denuded. Being no longer looked upon as the one all-embracing sovereign and enslaving art, architecture lost its power of retaining others in its service. Carving became Sculpture,--Imagery, Painting,--the Canon, Music. It was like the dismemberment of an Empire on the death of its Alexander,--each province making itself a kingdom."

While Masonry expressed itself in the handiwork of the Compagnons as our craftsmen were called in France, of the Comacines in Italy, and the Vehmgerichte in Germany, Gothic Architecture springing up in England after the Norman Conquest in 1066, gave an equal degree of prosperity to the Freemasons there. And as early as 1600 it was quite common in England for Operative Lodges to admit Speculative members.

Although engaged in the service of the Church the Freemasons did not even in medieval days wholly approve of the Church. Upon some of the highest cornices of their handiwork they have indelibly cartooned this contempt. For example Findel says: "In the St. Sebaldus Church of Nurembourg, is a carving showing a nun in the embrace of a monk. In Strassburg an Ass is reading Mass at an altar. In

Mecklenburg may be seen priests grinding dogmas out of a gristmill, and the Apostles in well-known Masonic attitudes. At Brandenburg you may see a fox in priestly robes preaching to a flock of geese."

With the Reformation came a distinct break between Church and Freemasonry.

A direct off-shoot of the traveling Freemasons were City Gilds which embodied much of the philosophy, and some of the brotherhood features, of our Order. Still they were quite distinct. They sometimes worked for the Freemasons. To enter the older and more artistic fraternity they must prove possessed of unusual skill. There can be no doubt of our direct descent from the medieval craftsmen of whose splendid symbolism I have tried to give a glimpse. Says Joseph Fort Newton in his classic of the Blue Lodge:

> "Masonry was then at the zenith of its power: in its full splendor: the Lion of the tribe of Judah its symbol, strength, wisdom and beauty its ideals. Its motto "to be faithful to God and the Government." Its mission to lend itself to the public good and fraternal Charity. Keeper of an ancient and high tradition, it was a refuge for the oppressed, and a teacher of art and morality to mankind."

It was when the Freemasons took Liberty for a slogan that the Church looked askance. In the more Catholic countries Freemasonry was frowned upon.

Newton stresses the fact that membership in the old Operative Lodges implied "honesty, trustfulness, fidelity, chastity and temperance: Fealty to the brotherhood: Regard for Secrecy: Reverence in God."

The organization of the lodges was perfect. The Master's word was Law. They had a distinctive uniform--a rather picturesque crew with skin-tight leather breeches, high boots, dark tunics and peaked hats: for arms short swords and a heavy walking stick.

It is a disputed point as to how many degrees the Operative Masons had. This much we know. Their work was simpler, less formal than it was after becoming Speculative. The gradual acceptance into the Order of men of prominence, influence, intellectuality and wealth, marks the evolution into Modern Masonry which took place in the year 1717, on St. John's day. In time the purely Speculative Masons outnumbered the older Operatives. At first the Operatives were differentiated by the title of Freemasons, the Speculatives by the name of Accepted Masons. Their union in 1717 explains our latterday nomenclature F. & A. M.

As the Age of Man's Self-Expression in Buildings of Stone Waned, and Freemasons no longer wrought in the language of Symbolic Carving, their successors clung to the old traditions and applied the centuries-old philosophy handed down from the days of Ancient Egypt by word of mouth, to the Building of Spiritual Temples, each man being his own Architect therefor.

It was the custom in those early days of Speculative Masonry for lodges to meet in taverns, and so the first four lodges assembling to form the First Grand Lodge of England, were those that met at "The Goose and Gridiron Ale House in St. Paul's Churchyard; The Crown Alehouse in Parker's Lane; The Apple Tree Tavern in Covent Garden and The Rummer and Grape Tavern."

In those days the tavern was a most important place in city life. Bishop Earle a writer of the 17th century says aptly: "Taverns are the busy man's recreation, the idle man's business, the melancholy man's sanctuary, and the stranger's welcome."

Some of the most eminent men of the day, nobles, gentlemen, editors, poets and philosophers foregathered at these taverns "the broachers of more news than hogsheads, more jests than news." As Macauley truly puts it, "The Coffee House was the Londoner's home and those who wished to find a gentleman, commonly asked not whether he lived in Fleet Street or Chancery Lane, but whether he frequented The Grecian or The Rainbow."

An eminently fitting place at that time for the meetings of a Masonic Lodge which in the early days numbered among the brethren many of the regular patrons of these old London Landmarks.

A very interesting description of London Taverns and Masonry is to be found in Vol. XIX Ars Quatuor Coronati Researches.

From now on, Speculative Masonry becomes the only Masonry we know-- an organization of worthy men, humanitarian in their sympathies, moral in their Code, practicing brotherly love, relief and truth, the three cardinal principles of Masonic Fellowship.

The example of Merrie England was followed by other lands. Grand Lodges had their being in Ireland in 1729, Scotland 1736, Berlin 1744, France 1736 and so on through the Universal Empire of Freemasonry.

In America the first Charter was issued to a Deputy Provincial Grand Master for New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania in 1730. One of our early historic lodges met at the Green Dragon Tavern in Boston. It was here the brethren of St. Andrew's planned and carried out the Boston Tea Party.

When we cast aside the yoke of England, our Lodges forsook all obedience to England's Grand Lodge. Each State formed its own Masonic Sovereignty. With the exception of the Anti-Masonic agitation sweeping the country in the middle twenties, Masonry has made a steady advance.

Now has it occurred to you to wonder why our Brotherhood has withstood the storm and stress of all time, why it has drawn into its membership some of the best of every generation of the Sons of Men ? Does not Albert Pike explain it when he says:

> "MASONRY ALONE preaches TOLERATION, the right of Man to abide by his own Faith, the right of all States to govern themselves. . . It rebukes alike the monarch who seeks to extend his dominions by Conquest, the Church that claims the right to suppress Heresy by fire and steel, and the Confederation of States that insist on maintaining a union by force and restoring Brotherhood by slaughter and subjugation."

Masonry has been variously defined. With Bro. Newton I rather prefer the German definition:

> "MASONRY is the activity of closely united men, who, employing symbolical forms borrowed principally from the mason's trade, and from architecture, work for the welfare of mankind, striving morally to ennoble themselves, and others, and thereby to bring about a universal league of mankind, which they aspire to exhibit even now on a small scale."

Our Masonic Ideal is growing more and more humanitarian. We are face to face with the realization that in a measure we are directly responsible for Man's well or ill being. More and more the deeper Masonic Thinkers are awakening to the fact that if Masonry would hold its own as a World-Force, it must exert its great influence and strength in the Arena of World Politics. Conditions have not yet come to a point in this country to compel Masons to have part actively in politics as such. And yet, all other things being equal, I would lay it down as an unwritten law implied by our obligations, when Brother Masons are Candidates for Office, Always give them the preference with your Ballot before other men. Only so may the Craft withstand the growing encroachments of Clericalism upon our daily life and ideals and most upon our American Political Life.

Under this phase our Latin American Brethren have blazed the trail. They through united action drove the hated Spanish Inquisition from the shores of the New World. In Mexico, Masons since 1833 have had their own particular platform, later formulated as the Laws of Reform into the Constitution of 1857, that same Constitution for which Madero gave his life, for which Carranza is fighting now.

Social Service is another latter day call upon the craft. In some cities, Masonic Social Service has been developed to the highest degree of efficiency.

He who would best serve Masonry must be tireless in his efforts. Maintain close connection with your Lodge; Make the visiting stranger feel at home; Aid the Master in devising ways and means to vary the monotony of the ceaseless grinding of our Degree Mills, endless repetition, an unavoidable consequence nowadays because of the Wave of Masonic Enthusiasm overspreading the country. If you would better fit yourself for the Fellowship of Freemasonry as an Active Worker, inform yourself of its splendid traditions, its history, aims, and present day activities.

All this is possible through our readable Masonic Magazines, and periodicals for those of you pressed for time, and the weightier tomes of Masonic Lore for the Booklover. You will soon learn there is much that we must do. We Masons are just finding ourselves.

I might consume hours telling of the problems to he met. Perhaps most of you know better than I many of them now staring us in the face. Signs of Unrest are all about us. How to meet new issues, new conditions, Masons may find by keeping in close contact with their Lodges, their Chapters, their Masonic Clubs and subsidiary organizations where the best of the brethren meet to take council together, and plan for the future, while showing an unrelaxing interest in the present.

There is much more to Masonry than the continuous repetition of Ritualism. While that has its function, in reminding us of the Great Philosophy which has successfully weathered the storms of centuries, and contributed its quota to the making of Better Men, Squarer Men, Truer Men, yet it has failed utterly and its beauty and rhythmic charm has had no meaning to him who came merely to be raised from a dead level to a living perpendicular, if he passes out again to the Profane, to flaunt his emblem proudly, while altogether out of touch with the Brotherhood, with the lodge, with himself--a Button Mason indeed, who comes no more to lodge unless it be to dine.

There is no more splendid Fellowship than that of Masonry--the glorious interlacing Fellowship of Man with the Great Architect of the Universe, the invisible, incorporeal ONE GOD--and next the Fellowship of Man with Men, the mutual recognition of Brotherhood. Such a Fellowship expresses both human

ideals and spiritual aspirations. All through the long centuries Masonry has borne the Secret Doctrine of Fellowship teaching Man to live in harmony with Man.

I have spoken of the Great Quest all Masons have made, all Masons are making, that steady secret search which some have found, and some have not, the goal.

To each man is the Secret Doctrine unraveled insofar as he senses his proximity to his God, his brotherly responsibility for his kind.

WHEN IS A MAN A MASON ?

Find the answer in that Blue Lodge Classic, *The Builders*, by Bro. Joseph Fort Newton:

> "When he can look out over the rivers, the hills, and the far horizon with a sense of his own littleness in the vast scheme of things, and yet have faith, hope and courage . . which is the root of every virtue. When he knows that down in his heart, every man is as noble, as vile, as divine, as diabolic, and as lonely as himself, and seeks to know, to forgive and to love his fellow-man. When he knows how to sympathize with men in their sorrow, yea, even in their sins, knowing that each man fights a hard fight against many odds. When he has learned how to make friends and to keep them, and above all, to keep friends with himself. . . When he can be happy and highminded amid the meaner drudgeries of life. . . When no voice of distress reaches his ears in vain, and no hand seeks his aid without response. . . When he knows how to pray, how to love, how to hope. . . When he has kept faith with himself with his fellowman, with his God: in his hand a sword for evil, in his heart a bit of a song, . . glad to live, but not afraid to die. . Such a man has found the ONLY REAL SECRET OF MASONRY, and THE ONE which it is trying to give all the world."

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